

STUDENT DIRECTED LEARNING:

Student-directed learning is a method of education that requires students to be “active” learners. Students’ interests, their needs, and their abilities determine what and how information is taught in the classroom. Student-centered or student-directed learning is in contrast to teacher-centered learning where teacher’s present pre-arranged lesson plans and curriculum to the students.

This learning method aims towards the learners being the responsible owners and managers of their own learning process. It integrates self-management with self-monitoring. Self-management is the management of the context, including the social setting, resources, and actions whereas the self-monitoring process is where the learners monitor, evaluate, and regulate their own learning strategies. One way to accomplish this is by planning an activity for the students to meet their core standards along with offering them a choice. If a student is researching a topic for a Language Arts lesson, they do so independently so that they become experts on their chosen topic and then they are able to teach the class the information that they have learned. This makes for a much more meaningful lesson and students become more personally involved in the learning process.

Another plus to this is that the instructor learns more about his or her students and their interests. This can narrow the focus of a particular curriculum unit. For example: if a 3rd grade teacher was doing a unit on oceanography, there would be a long list of objectives accompanying it. Part of narrowing down the focus would be to have the students brainstorm their knowledge of what they already knew about oceans. This is a great way for the teacher to discover what their students know the most information about. So if the students know quite a bit about sharks, the teacher can plan the unit around this area of interest. They will be meeting the standards and objectives of that unit but they will be doing it through a topic they have shown interest in.

So how do you promote student directed learning in the classroom? You do so by creating a positive learning environment and building enthusiasm for involvement

in the process. This begins with the teacher's understanding of student directed learning and their commitment to be a strong promoter of it. By cultivating a positive learning environment, student's productivity grows in leaps and bounds. A good way for the teacher to promote this kind of environment is by displaying work that previous classes have accomplished so that the students know what is possible to achieve in their classroom. It makes for an exciting learning adventure for each and every student. An encouraging student directed learning environment should present visuals such as pictures, posters, and charts all around the classroom. There should be available stations for computing, reading and any special activities of the course. There should also be private places, small-group meeting corners and open space for class meetings. Busy and active meeting times should alternate with quiet reflective times for the students. What student directed learning aims to achieve is instead of students memorizing facts in a textbook, they are learning metacognitive and self-evaluating skills. They are learning how to assess what they need to learn in order to solve a problem or complete a project. This guides students to hone in on their researching skills instead of just memorizing the information that they are given.